

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

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CBP Border Patrol Agents Utilize Mobile X-Ray Technology

Two Seizures near Las Cruces Yields Nearly \$200,000 in Marijuana

Las Cruces, New Mexico – More than 200 pounds of marijuana were seized overnight at a traffic checkpoint outside of Las Cruces, New Mexico as part of a special operation that involved the use of a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) mobile x-ray truck that was operated by CBP Inspectors.

Border Patrol agents, working in conjunction with other U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers in Las Cruces, apprehended three men Tuesday evening in connection with two separate seizures at the Border Patrol's immigration checkpoint on I-25, north of Las Cruces.

The first seizure was found in a 1997 Freightliner tractor-trailer driven by 26-year old Oscar Romero Reyes, Jr. More than 179 pounds of marijuana was found in the sleeper section of the truck. Agents located 58 bundles of marijuana covered with laundry detergent and wrapped in clear cellophane and brown tape concealed in duffel bags. Agents say Reyes is a United States Citizen who resides in Tornillo, Texas.

A second seizure was made in a 1999 Freightliner tractor-trailer driven by 47-year old Craig Ralph Owens, United States Citizen residing in Albuquerque. CBP personnel located more than 60 pounds of marijuana in a spare tire inside the trailer of the truck, and in two handbags in the sleeper portion of the tractor-trailer.

Border Patrol canines "Cindy" and "Cora" helped confirm the presence of contraband in both tractor-trailers by alerting on the trucks. After the x-ray operator noticed some discrepancies, a canine was summoned and indicated the presence of contraband in the tractor-trailers. Both seizures combined have an estimated value of nearly \$200,000.00.

The technology, Mobile Vehicle and Container Inspection System (M-VACIS), is a non-intrusive system that employs a gamma ray source to produce images within commercial trucks and tractor-trailers revealing contraband such as drugs, weapons and currency. This technology serves as a force-multiplier and complements the work of CBP Border Patrol agents, Inspectors and canine teams.

This is the third special operation at Border Patrol traffic checkpoints that involved the use of sophisticated mobile x-ray equipment provided by CBP personnel.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Las Cruces assumed custody of the subjects, contraband and vehicles. The drivers of the tractor-trailer rigs are currently in federal custody at the Doña Ana County Jail. They face charges of possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

To date, agents at the Las Cruces Station have made 285 drug seizures, valued at approximately \$21 million.

The Border Patrol is a division of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a new agency within the Department of Homeland Security responsible for managing and securing our Nation's borders.

~CBP~

**Raw video footage and/or digital photos are available to interested members of the media upon request.